



THE EDWARD L. ROSE CONSERVANCY



Table of Contents

[Stunning Loss of Birds](#)

[Do You Own a Riparian Buffer?](#)

[If You Shop on Amazon.com...Consider This](#)

Quick Links

[Our Website](#)

[Like us on Facebook!](#)

[Donate](#)

[Contact Us](#)

Stunning Loss of Birds

Last September, the respected journal, Science, described a breathtaking study outlining the devastating decline in wild bird populations since 1970. Nearly three billion – that's billion – wild birds, nearly a third of the total population, have vanished when compared to numbers from half a century ago.

Borrowing from the old adage - the canary in the coalmine – this enormous decline is a clear barometer of an ecosystem under terrible stress.

Ken Rosenberg, one of the principal authors of the study, and a senior scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology said, “Multiple, independent lines of evidence show a massive reduction in the abundance of birds. We expected to see continuing declines of threatened species. But for the first time, the results also showed pervasive losses among common birds across all habitats, including backyard birds. Every field that’s plowed under, and every wetland area that’s drained, you lose the birds in that area.”

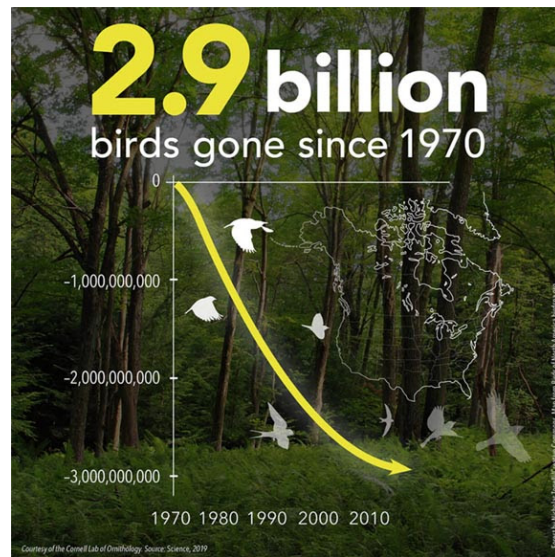
How did they go about measuring the impact? Five years ago, Rosenberg and his team analyzed the North American Breeding Bird Survey, an annual bird-counting census performed each spring by volunteers. These surveys represent decades of data for more than 400 bird species. Rosenberg then cross-referenced this data against 55 species (including forest, tundra, and shorebirds) tracked by the Audubon Christmas Bird Count and the International Shorebird Survey. Twelve years of springtime weather radar data from 143 stations across the country provided information on bird migration. Lastly, they included data on waterfowl from aerial surveys. This comprehensive look ultimately included 529 bird species, representing 75% of all species in North America and 90% of all birds in the region.

In addition to the obvious culprits of industrial and residential development, there is evidence that pesticide use plays a critical role in the decline as well. Neonicotinoids have been identified as a probable culprit. When ingested by migratory birds, neonicotinoids (widely used to treat seeds), inhibit normal feeding patterns, resulting in inadequate weight gain and delayed departures from migration layovers. The end result: reduced population levels for those birds.

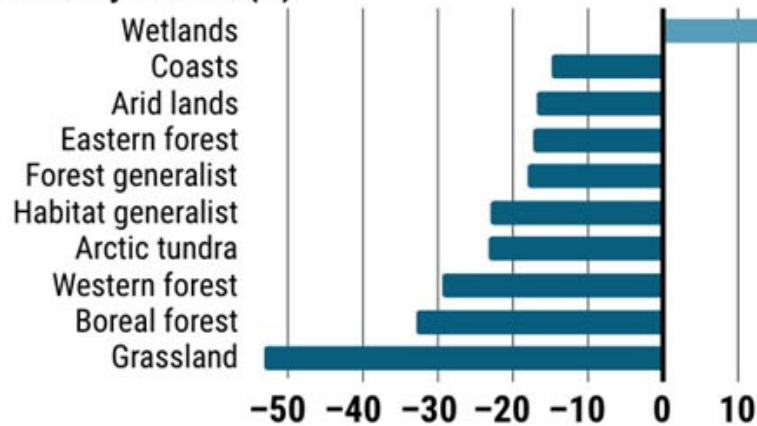
Addressing some of these issues through legislation has been beneficial. For example, wetland protection, including the requirement that developers who fill one wetland must create comparable wetland elsewhere, have contributed to the sole encouraging statistic in Rosenberg’s study – that wetlands did represent the only ecosystem to see increased bird population.

Currently under review in the House of Representatives is the Migratory Bird Protection Act. Three years ago, the Department of the Interior issued new rules under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that, for the first time, absolved industries of responsibility to protect birds from hazards such as open oil pits and power lines, no longer holding them liable for bird deaths. The new legislation seeks to reverse that directive.

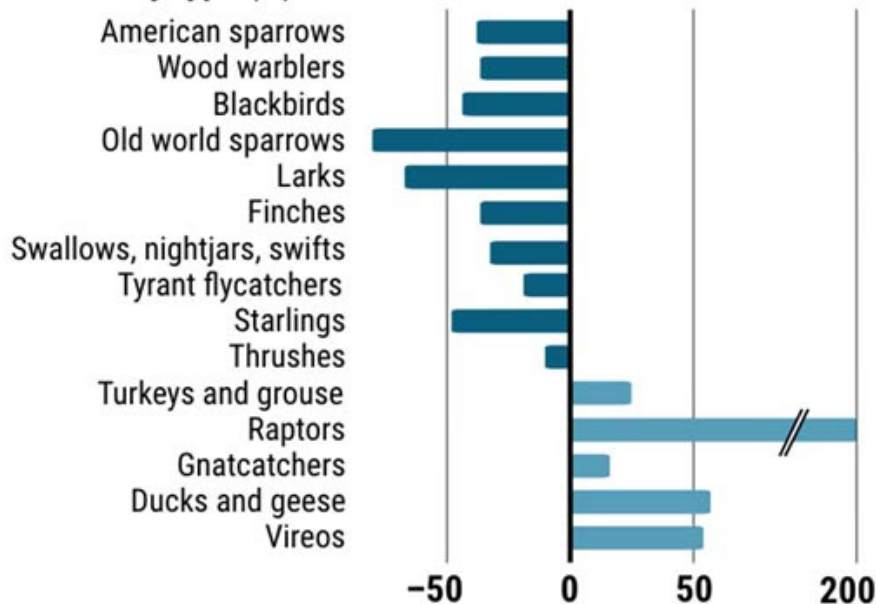
As evidenced by the increase of wild birds in wetlands, it is undeniable that we, the people, can save birds by protecting the land on which they are best suited to live. Land conservancies such as E.L. Rose demonstrate that people can protect birds by protecting land. The data is undeniable – habitat protection is now a critical need.



Bird decline by habitat (%)



Decline by type (%)



K. ROSENBERG *ET AL.*, *SCIENCE*, ADAPTED BY N. DESAI/*SCIENCE*

Do You Own a Riparian Buffer?

Wikipedia (the default go-to on the notorious Internet) defines a riparian buffer as:

A vegetated area (a "buffer strip") near a stream, usually forested, which helps shade and partially protect the stream from the impact of adjacent land uses. It plays a key role in increasing water quality in associated streams, rivers, and lakes, thus providing environmental benefits. With the decline of many aquatic ecosystems due to agriculture, riparian buffers have become a very common conservation practice aimed at increasing water quality and reducing pollution.

Did you know that the New York State Department of Conservation provided the E.L. Rose Conservancy with funds from the Chesapeake Bay Riparian Buffer grant to permanently protect those buffers adjacent to waterways in our region?

Here's how it works. Let's say there's a stream on your property and the land on either side exceeds 18 acres. Utilizing funds from this grant, E.L. Rose will pay to permanently protect those banks,



including needed shrub and tree covering, and also reimburse you, the landowner, for costs associated with conveying an easement to the Conservancy. That includes surveys, any mortgage subordination, land appraisals, and filing of the easement.

If you think you might be a candidate for this program please contact our offices. We can set up a meeting to walk the property, discuss the process, and develop a Letter of Intent which clearly spells out your responsibilities as the party conveying the easement, and we, the entity responsible for the costs of protecting those important lands.

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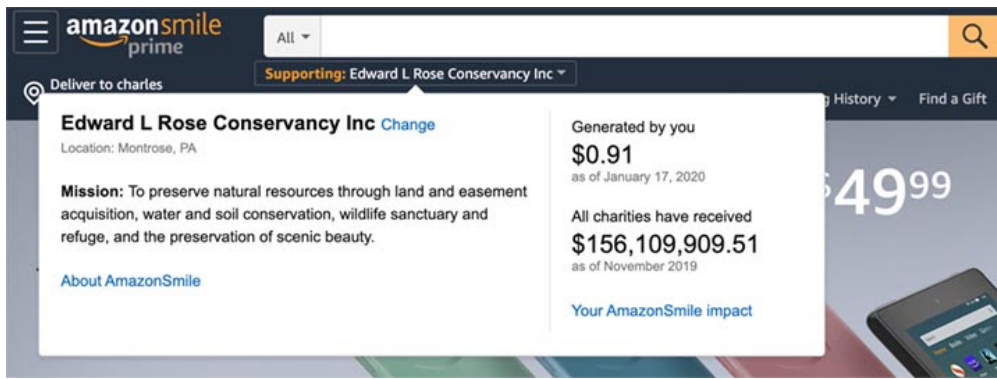


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Location: Montrose, PA

Mission: To preserve natural resources through land and easement acquisition, water and soil conservation, wildlife sanctuary and refuge, and the preservation of scenic beauty.

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